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PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN BELARUS OF 16 MAY 1999 AND VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Analysis of the process of the presidential elections scheduled on May 16, 1999 by the Supreme Soviet of the 13th Convo-cation shows that the Belarusan authorities actively used repressions in order to break-down the elections.

2 300 members of the Commissions of deferent levels on presidential elections and activists of the electoral campaign were interrogated on the case of Viktar Ganchar who is accused of breaking the Article 190 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus (unauthorised appropriation of a post or power by an official, connected with committing socially dangerous deeds on this base).

On January 10, 1999 the Supreme Soviet of the 13th Convocation announced the date of presidential elections which were to be held on May 16, 1999. 44 deputies of the mentioned above Supreme Soviet voted for this decision. The sitting took place in the Minsk hotel «Tourist». The Prosecutor's Office in its turn passed a statement saying that the activities connected with organisation of early presidential elections don't correspond to the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus and to current legislation as well. «Such activities can be considered precisely as an attempt to make a coup d'etat, intention to provoke social desta-bilisation and as its result public disorder» is said in this statement. The statement's authors warned that «organisation and participation in such illegal actions would result in criminal and administrative punishment» and called citizens «not to react to provocative statements of organisers of such actions, not to participate in these illegal actions». Official mass-media which are completely subdued to Alexander Lukashenka didn't give any information about the decision of the Supreme Soviet or mocked at commenting on it. In February1999 a secretary of the Central Election Commission Barys Gyunter said: «This year the Alexander Lukashenka's term of office is over. That's why the deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the 13th Convocation fulfilled their duty and scheduled presidential elections on 16 May. They also elected the Central Elec-tion Commission. If the authorities don't interfere in our activity we will carry out this elections according to the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus. The 5-ear term of Lukashenka's being President is over, that's why we have to conduct presidential elections in 1999. The

(to be continued on p.p. 2-3)

Presidential Elections in Belarus of 16 May 1999 and Violations of Human Rights

(beginning on p.1)

results of 1996 referendum, by which Lukashenka prolonged term of his office, were accepted by the world publicity as having the character of recommendation. It was up to the Supreme Soviet of the 13th Convocation to take them into account and make decisions. But the results of the referendum were forcibly put in force and given status of law by the President what is illegal by itself». The Article 81 of the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus and Article 1 of the Law on the Presidential Elections of the Republic of Belarus unequivocally say that President of the Republic of Belarus is elected for 5 years term.

During the election campaign several thousands of engaged people in that way or another suffered from activities of the Belarusan authorities. More than 100 members of Commissions on Presidential Elections were detained, 20 people were sentenced to different terms of the administrative arrest. The repressions were mainly used against organisers of the elections.

1. Persecution of Mikhail Chyhir – a candidate for the Presidential post.

On March 30, 15 unknown persons in civil clothes tried to burst into Mikhail Chyhir's pre-election headquarters. They said that they had come there to give Chyhir a sub-poena to visit a militia department. According to witnesses these people arrived at the place where the head-quarters was situated and watched it for some time. After Mikhail Chyhir had come to the office they rang the door-bell and ordered to open the door. They refused to show any documents and used bluster. They tore off the telephone wires. In spite of this activists of the election campaign managed to phone journalists using their mobile telephones. When the journalists arrived the «unknown men in civil clothes» disappeared. In some time Mikhail Chyhir and his assistants left the head-quarters. At 13. 00 Chyhir's car was stopped in the suburb Uruchcha and Chyhir was detained together with his assistant colonel Uladzimir Baradach. Then they were brought to the Investigative Administration of the Republic of Belarus. At 17. 00 M.Chyhir gave witness on the case which was brought in connection with credits given by «Agraprambank» at the beginning of 1990s. Approximately at 19. 00 Uladzimir Baradach was released. Mikhail Chyhir was taken to the isolation ward of the Minsk City Executive Committee. First he was detained for 3 days according to Article 199 of the Criminal Code (arrest of a person suspected in committing a crime) for giving witness on the case which had been instituted for breaking the Article 91 (large scale stealing of money). Then the term of detention was prolonged up to ten days. On April 8, a 10 day-term's detention of ex-Prime Minister of Belarus was over. Any further detention of M.Chyhir and keeping him in custody without charging him would be unlawful. However, in the early morning on 8 April the Investigation Committee of the Ministry of Internal Affairs brought the official charge against M.Chyhir. He was incriminated with breach of Article 91 (p.4) (large scale embezzlement) and Article 166 (abuse of authority). By way of evidence of such «theft» was 1 million USD transferred into the bank account of one Canadian building firm as the deposit for building an office of «Belagraprambank».

By acting in such a way the Belarusan authorities broke the Article 23 of the Law on the Presidential Elections of the Republic of Belarus saying that: «A candidate on the Presidential post can't undergo criminal punishment, be arrested, detained or undergo other kinds of administrative punishment upon court's decision without an agreement of the Central Election Commission.

On 7 April, the wife of Mikhail Chyhir submitted a statement to the General Prosecutor of the Republic of Belarus. In that statement Yuliya Chyhir denied the information spread in the official press that her husband was involved in theft of 1 million USD.

On April 8, the court hearings in the Central district court took place in Minsk. Pavel Karshunovich, deputy chairman of the court, examined M.Chyhir's appeal regarding measures of his detention and ruled out that they would remain the same. M.Chyhir's wife - Yuliya Chyhir (a lawyer by profession) defended her husband in court on her own. A complaint was lodged saying that detention and keeping in custody is only used in cases with dangerous criminals jeopardising the people's lives. The court rejected M.Chyhir's appeal and his wife's complaint. The Prosecutor's Office sanctioned his arrest for another 3 months. Thus, M.Chyhir saw presidential elections being behind bars.

At night on May 25-26 Mikhail Chyhir's pre-election headquarters was robbed by unknown persons wearing masks.

In April 1999 the deputy Prosecutor of the city of Gomel Valery Furs brought the criminal case against the ex-Minister of Internal Affairs Yury Zakharanka, co-ordinator of the election campaign in the Mikhail Chyhir's head-quarters in Gomel region, for breaking the Article 188 (p.2) of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus. According to this Article one can be sentenced up to one year of imprisonment and corrective-works or can be fined. The republican search was announced. Zakharanka didn't know anything about the criminal case instituted against him and was not summoned to the Prosecutor's office.

On May 8, Volha Barysawna Zakharanka applied to militia asking to find her husband Yury Zakharanka. She told that she spoke with her husband by phone. While speaking Y.Zakharanka said that he had just parked his car and was going home. «I'll be home in 10 minutes» – said her husband. He disappeared while going home (a parking-place is in ten-minutes' walk from it). Volga Zakharanka does not exclude that her husband can be subjected to anything. It should be mentioned that Y.Zakharanka was often threatened and warned for his opposition activities, for promoting Mikhail Chyhir and intention to set up the Belarusan Officers' Union. «...It was clearly seen as the authorities were disturbed by the activities of my husband. We were constantly overheard and sent different kinds of threats», — said Volha Zakharanka. Yury Zakharanka was appointed the Minister of Internal Affairs in 1994 and was dismissed a year and half later. There's a view that he was dismissed because of his refusal to fight against the opposition using all possible means regardless of the Constitution and the law, what was expected from him by authorities.

2. Persecution of the Central Election Commission.

In February, Viktar Ganchar, chairman of the Central Election Commission on presidential elections was officially warned by the KGB. The warning said: «the activity run by Ganchar and the Central Election Commission's members contradicts the current legislation, it does provoke destabilisation of political situation in the Republic of Belarus and might lead to treason according to the art.

61 (p.1) of the Criminal Code. In connection with this V.Ganchar is passed an official warning and explained that the activity of such kind might lead to offence and entail criminal responsibility».

On February 11, immediately after working meeting of representatives of local Commissions on presidential elections with the chairman of the Central Election Commission Viktar Ganchar two participants of the meeting mentioned above were detained . They were Uladzimir Shytsikaw and Alexander Zaranok. The detention was carried out by a big group of policemen under the guidance of Oblast Department Deputy Head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs Salawiow. The detainees were seized 760 placards with information about coming presidential elections. The policemen drew up a report and released them. In some days the 60 year old Alexander Zaranok, a resident of Kalinkavichy was brought a verdict: «three days of administrative detention» by the Gomel Central district court. On February 20 A.Zaranok was released. He called the conditions of his detention to be «brutish».

On February 22, in Gomel three men were brought administrative verdicts. The court trials were conducted in the Gomel Central district Court. Uladzimir Shytsikaw, a member of the Belarusan Popular Front «Adradzhiennie», who was detained immediately after the working meeting with V.Ganchar on February 11, was sentenced to three days of administrative detention. Ruslan Bialanaw and Pavel Klimovich, the activists of the Student Trade-union, were brought the same verdicts. They were detained and given sub-poenas by patrol on February 19 for walking down the Savetskaia street with flags of the Independent Trade-union.

3. Arrest of the members of the Central Election Commission.

On February 25, the members of the Central Commission on presidential elections were detained by the law enforcement agencies in Minsk. The detention took place in the morning during the meeting approving lists for regional commissions, which was organised by the «underground» Central Election Commission in the cafe «Coliseum» located in the Officers' Palace near the Kastrychnitskaia underground station. The formal ground for detention was the conducting of an unauthorised meeting, which entails criminal responsibility according to the art.167 (p.1) of the Administrative Code. All the detained were brought to the Minsk Lenin Department of Internal Affairs. Among them were Viktar Ganchar, Barys Gyunter, secretary of the CEC, and the rest members of the CEC. In the second half of the day the court trials of the detained members of the CEC were conducted in the Department of Internal Affairs not in the court. The members of the Central Election Commission called for barristers and that's why the trials were postponed on March 1.

On March 1, the trials under members of the Central Election Commission took place. Court hearings were conducted in the building of the Leninski district's Department of Internal Affairs. Genadz Samoilenka was the first, who came to the «court» in the morning. He was fined 30 million roubles (100 USD). Five more members of the Central Election Commission were charged with breaking the art. 167 (p.1) of the Administrative Code(failure to comply with order of conducting meetings, marches, rallies and pickets). The judge Valiantsina Ziankevich brought the following verdicts:

1. *Sidarenka Valery Ivanavich* (a worker) –20 million roubles fine;
2. *Klianovaia Valiantsina Vitalewna* (a mother of 16 children, 6 of them are minors) – warning;
3. *Zakurdaiew Leanid Ryhoravich* (born in 1926, a veteran of the 2 World War, pensioner, physically handicapped) – 20 million roubles fine;
4. *Gurynovich Anatol Vasilievich* – 5 days of imprisonment.
5. *Lagun Valiantsina Viktarawna* (a staff member of the National Academy of Sciences) – warning.

A little bit later in the Minsk Leninski District Court other members of the Commission were charged. This time public representatives were allowed to come in. The beginning of the process was even taken a film by Russian TV-broadcasting companies. But then the journalists were asked by Alena Tsierashkova to leave the court room. She passed the following verdicts:

1. *Abadowski Siargei Viktaravich* (a legal adviser of the Belarusan Independent Trade-union) – 5 days of administrative arrest (S.Abadowski refused to reply to the judge' questions and give any explanations in token of protest against illegal detention and bringing him to the book. After judge announced court's decision he went on hunger-strike);
2. *Navumchyk Iosif Adamavich* (Vitsebsk) – 15 million roubles fine.
3. *Sazanavets Liliya Vatslavawna* (mother of two underage children, Lida) – warning;
4. *Pakhabaw Mikalai Andreiavich* (worker, Barysaw) – 30 million roubles fine;
5. *Dzilinchus Alginas Yuzefavich* (film director) – 30 million roubles fine;
6. *Koktysh Alexander* (journalist) – 30 million roubles fine;
7. *Gyunter Barys Davydavich* (secretary of the Central Commission on Presidential Elections) – 5 days of administrative arrest.

None of the accused people took the blame. All of them stated that they executed decision of the legitimate Supreme Soviet of the 13th Convocation and that their activity was directed both by the Law on Presidential Elections of the Republic of Belarus (adopted in 1994), which is still actual without any amendments, and by the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus adopted in 1994.

So, in this case the right to free assembly provided by Article 21 of International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights right was abused.

On March 1, in Minsk Viktar Ganchar was arrested. He was forced out of his car by police and brought to the Leninski District Court, where he was sentenced to 10 days of imprisonment for heading the Commission. During the trial of him the principal of open public consideration of administrative cases in court and the right to be defended were violated.

On March 1, Viktar Ganchar went on hunger-strike. On March 3, his wife Zinaida Ganchar was allowed to meet her husband tete-a-tete, which lasted just some minutes. Chairman of the Central Election Commission said that he was going to be on hunger-strike until all the members of the Commission would have been kept in jails. An emergency ambulance «kept vigil» near the preliminary ward. Apart from this the officials of the special services had an eye on security guards responsible for safe-keeping of prisoners not let them to be in touch with journalists and public.

On March 5, Viktar Ganchar was enforced by doctors to stop hunger-strike (they began a forcible feeding of him). Anatol Gurynovich, member of the Central Election Commission who served his term in the neighbouring cell, heard Viktar Ganchar putting up resistance to doctors. Ganchar's principal condition – immediate release of all accused members of the Central Election Commission – was not fulfilled.

Viktar Ganchar said about his hunger-strike: «There were no alternatives and maybe by this fact I can explain why I didn't suffer much during all these 10 days and this decision was rather simple. I was ready long ago. Unfortunately only my strong body wasn't completely ready, that's why on the 4th – 5th day my will power was becoming stronger and stronger. The organism started to fail me – I mean those the most hard days when I was suffering from spasm and unfortunately I had pangs one after another. Nevertheless even in this critical situation I had no choice. I refused so-called forced medical aid offered by doctors from the Ministry of Internal Affairs. It was absolutely

(to be continued on p.p.4-5)

Presidential elections in Belarus of 16 May 1999 and violations of human rights

(beginning on p.p.1-3)

unaccep-table... In reality the decisions were made at level of Lukashenka and Sheiman. As a result – inadequate or even belated actions. For example, two days were necessary to make the inadequate decision: to put an end to the hunger-strike by force, with the assistance of special troops in black masks. In this connection I think that the people who were making such decisions were overwhelmed by fear and panic... Of course, it's unbelie-vable that they were worried about my state of health. They were afraid that there would be an information drain, a terrible scandal – which could ine-vitably lead to a crash of that extraor-dinary power».

On March 11, a term of admi-nistrative arrest of Viktar Ganchar finished. Chairman of the legal Central Election Commission was to have been discharged from the special militia department at 2 p.m. At that time representatives of mass-media, publicity, members of the Central Committee on Presidential Elections, activists of democratic parties gathered near custody centre. Chairman of the Supreme Soviet Syamion Sha-retsky was also present. But they could not manage to meet Ganchar. It turned out that in the morning he was taken to another isolator where he was interrogated by an investigator. After this Viktar Ganchar was taken to Lagoysk Avenue by a car and thrown out of it. Viktar Ganchar, suffering from exhaustion, had to get home on his own. We found out that during his being in the special militia department in Akrestsin Street Ganchar was tortured. He was chained to a radiator by hand-cuffs and beaten by people with black masks on their faces. They also twisted his arms and legs back – made him a «swallow» as it is usually called. After tortures and dry hunger-strike Viktar Ganchar was in rather bad health. At night on March 12 his wife had to call the ambulance.

Usage of tortures as well as other kinds of a cruel and inhuman treatments and punishments is nothing but violation of international norms in particular: Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 10 of International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and International Convention Against Tortures (1984) and others.

On March 3, Syarhei Abadowski, a member of the Central Election Commission was sentenced to administrative arrest and was brought to the emergency hospital with diagnosis «high blood-pressure». It was a consequence of a hunger-strike, declared by Abadowski during the trial, against illegal detention. In the hospital S.Abadowski was given an emergency medical help and released. He was left two and a half days to be in custody which he had to serve after his recovery.

4. Case of Yawhen Murashka

On February 12, in Gomel the policemen guided by the colonel Salawiow, head of Gomel Region's Department of the Administration of Internal Affairs, and lieutenant-colonel Smolikaw, head of the Central District Department of Internal Affairs, without search-warrant searched the office of Belarusan Helsinki Committee. They confiscated 14.000 copies of placards advertising presidential elections scheduled on May 16. The chairman of the Belarusan Helsinki Committee's Gomel branch Y.Murashka, resident of Magileu city, A.Fiodaraw and unemployed L.Udovenka were present while policemen were searching the office. As it turned out later they were looking for a «bomb». Murashka, Fiodaraw and Udovenka were taken written explanations of the placards' origin. The victims lodged a complaint about policemen activi-ties to the to the prosecutor's office of the Gomel Central district.

On May 9, 1999 chairman of the Regional Election Commission Murashka was detained in the town of Kalinkavichy (Gomel region). Policemen searched his car over. As a result they confiscated voting bulletins and other documents connected with the elections (papers of the Gomel Regional Election Commission and Zhytkavichy, Kalinkavichy, Petrykaw, Elsk, Narawliany, Rechytsa, Khoiniki Districts Commissions). On the trial, conducted on May 10, Murashka was sentenced to 10 days of administrative arrest.

A criminal case for breaking the Article 186 (p.3) of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus (organisation or active participation in the activities aimed at breaking public order) was brought against Mu-rashka for organisation of meeting with the chairman of the Central Commission on the presidential elections. In comp-liance with this Article one can be sentenced up to 3 years of imprisonment.

5. Summons of members of Election Commissions to Prosecutors' Offices, Departments of Internal Affairs and intimidation for their attempt «to seize the power».

On March 11, Kanstantsin Viartseika, member of the Peasant Party and representative of the initiative group on Mikhail Chyhir's nomination for the presidential office, was detained by policemen in the town of Belaaziorsk (Biaroza district, Brest Region). He was detained while collecting the signatures for Mikhail Chyhir and then brought to the Prosecutor's Office, where he was warned by Prosecutor Kurylevich.

On March 12, the Prosecutor of the Central district of Homel Yemelianenka warned Viktar Artsyukh for taking part in the sitting of the local branch of the Independent Trade-union, where the question of membership in the District Commission on Presidential Elections was considered.

On March 12, I.Smahin, H.Zhuk, M.Aksionaw and A.Katsapava, the members of the Gomel Commission on Presidential Elections, were summoned to the prosecutor's office «to give explanations».

On March 13, a picket was held in Navapolatsk devoted to the Constitution's Day. It was organised by representatives of the local council of the BPF «Adradzhennie». People held placards saying «We have the right to elections!», «Belarus is a free country!», «Presidential elections should be held on May 16!»

On March 15, Mikola Sulima, chairman of the local board of the BPF «Adrazhennie», was detained while collecting the signatures in Belaaziorsk (Brest region). He was warned by the Prosecutor's Office.

On March 14, member of the BPF «Adradzhennie» Yury Pchelnikaw was detained at 18 o'clock in Nepakoranyia Avenue in Magileu. He was searched and then brought to the Mahileu Kastrychnitsky district's Department of Internal Affairs to find out his personality, where he had been kept for 3 hours. He was confiscated printed documents, among them were

papers with signatures for Zyanon Paznyak, fly-sheets, saying «Paznyak paves the way for Belarus to Europe», fly-sheets with information about the Belarusan People's Republic. Yury Pchelnikaw refused to sign the report drawn up by the policemen. He has been accused for breaking the article 173 (p.3) of the Administrative Code (distribution of printed editions which were published with breaking the established order and without imprinted data, containing the information aimed at doing harm to public order, to the rights and legal interests of citizens).

On March 15, Zmitser Salawiow and Aleg Pashkevich were detained in Navapolatsk at 9 o'clock p.m. The formal ground for detention was that they were collecting the signatures for Zyanon Paznyak. Policemen demanded that they should put down the explanation about their activities. In response to the question asked by Z.Salawiow and A.Pashkevich why they were detained policemen told that they looked like robbers wanted by police...

On March 15, the members of the local Commission on Presidential Elections were summoned to the Prosecutor's Office in Baranavichy (Brest region). Baliaslaw Bolbat, a member of the Belarusan Social-Democratic Party «Narodnaya Gramada», the members of the Belarusan Popular Front «Adradzhennie» Uladzimir Gowsha, Georgii Zagorski, Tamara Zverava, Mikhas Barysevich and chairman of the local board of the BPF «Adradzhennie» Mikalai Severtsaw were among detained people. Deputy Prosecutor Kvashnin warned them and told that in case they had carried on their activities in the commission on presidential elections they would have been brought to book.

On March 15, A.Prasniakow, Deputy Prosecutor of Savetsky district of Gomel, officially warned Anatol Paplawski, active member of the BPF and the Central City Commission on Presidential Elections. Prasniakow warned Anatol Paplawski that in case he had continued his activities he would have been brought to book.

On March 15, Mikola Klimovich, member of the BPF, was summoned to the prosecutor's office of the Kastrychnitski district of Minsk. Prosecutor Zhukavets led a discussion with M.Klimovich about the activities of the District Commission on Presidential Elections.

On March 16, Uladzimir Pleshchanka, a member of the Vitsebsk council of the BPF «Vybar» (Choice) and well known opposition activist, was tried in court in Vitsebsk. He was accused of being involved in the case of disappearance of the bust to the Russian commander Suvorov. Pleshchanka was charged with breaking Article 201 (p.1) and Article 225 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus (intentional hooliganism and destruction of historical and cultural monuments). The public of the city showed interest in the case. There were no free sits in the court room. Nadzeia Dudarava, observer of the OSCE in Belarus and the representatives of the Human Rights Centre «Viasna-96» Ales Byalatski and Valiantsin Stefanovich in capacity of public defenders were present at the trial. It should be mentioned that 50-year old U. Pleshchanka has already been kept in custody for seven months. The state of his health has considerably worsened for this period. During his speech U.Pleshchanka stated that he was not being accused of hooliganism but of his political view points and public activities. It became clear during the court sitting that there was no accusatory resolution in the court. To be exact U.Pleshchanka had only the first page of this document in triplicate. So the judge was forced to stop the court sitting and put off the trial on March 26. The barrister and public defenders insisted on immediate making Pleshchanka free on his own recognisance to remain within the confines of the city, but in vain.

On March 11, Zmitser Abramovich, representative of the Belarusan Social-Democratic Party, member of the initiative group on Mikhail Chyhir's nomination for Presidential office, was detained and then brought to the local Administration of Internal Affairs in Barysaw (Minsk Region). Militiamen drew up a report saying that Z.Abramovich broke the Article 167 (p.3) (breach of the law on elections) of the Administrative Code of the Republic of Belarus. Next day he was detained again by policemen while collecting the signatures for M.Chyhir. But this time policemen decided not to draw up a new report. On March 17 Z.Abramovich was again detained but this time by the officials of the Committee on State Security (KGB). Chairman of the Barysaw department of the Administration of the Committee on State Security for Minsk and Minsk region S.M.Litsvinchyk officially warned Z.Abramovich «for the activities which might cause amenability provided by Article 61 (p.1) of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus (a plot aimed at seizure of power by unconstitutional means)». The aforesaid Article provides amenability up to 12-year term of imprisonment with property confiscation or without it. In spite of intimidations Zmitser that same day went on collecting the signatures.

On March 17, Ales Pikula, Chairman of the local council of the «Young Front», was detained by unknown people wearing civil clothes in Baranavichy at 17.00 p.m. while collecting the signatures for Zyanon Paznyak. The unknown people did not introduce themselves that is why Ales Pikula put up resistance. They beaten him severely and dragged him by force to the car, where he was threatened and led a discussion about his political activities. Having driven him round the town they released him without drawing up a report. Ales Pikula appealed with complaint to the local Prosecutor's Office. On March 25 he got a response by Chairman of the Baranavichy Department of Internal Affairs lieutenant-colonel S.Mostyk (a copy of this document was submitted to the Prosecutor of the town) saying: «The appeal lodged by Mr. A.Pikula to institute a criminal case can not be satisfied in compliance with the Article 5 (p.2) of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus (a lack of corpus delicti). The search of people who have beaten you on March 17 goes on. In case you don't agree with this decision you can appeal against it in the Prosecutor's Office of the town of Baranavichy».

On March 18, at Magileu's Central District Court the under aged member of the «Young Front» Ales Pawtaratsky stood the trial. The day before he had been detained while collecting the signatures for Zyanon Paznyak nomination for Presidential office. The judge Saroka fined him for 250 000 roubles according to article 167 (p.3) of the Administrative Code of the Republic of Belarus. The judge refused to allow Valadar Tsurupanaw to be a public defender on the trial. It seems very strange that Ales Pawtaratsky stood the trial in court. According to the Article 167 (p.3) and Article 201 of the Administrative Code of the Republic of Belarus the cases of such kind are to be considered by regional committees on the cases of under aged persons. In spite of this the judge decided that 16-year old Ales Pawtaratsky was old enough to consider his case in the court.

On March 18, the Aleinikaw family was summoned to the Prosecutor's Office in Dzyatlava (Grodna region). Vasil Aleinikaw, Chairman of the local council of the BPF «Adradzhennie», his wife Antanina Aleinikava, Chairman of the local Commission on Presidential Elections, and Uladzimir Rudzew, Secretary of that very Commission were detained. They were officially warned.

On March 18, in the town of Mar'ina Gorka (Pukhavichy district, Minsk region) at about 19 o'clock p.m. the flat, where the local commission on presidential elections is based, was searched. The search was conducted by policemen with captain

(to be continued on p.p.6-7)

Presidential Elections in Belarus of 16 May 1999 and Violations of Human Rights

(beginning on p.p.1-5)
L.D.Nechuivitser at the head without search warrant. They confiscated printed production and personal belongings (two white-red-white flags).

On March 18, Uladzimir Shytsikaw, a member of the local Commission on Presidential Elections, was summoned to the Prosecutor's Office of the Gomel region. It was said in the writ that he was to give «explanations» to prosecutor Khizhanok. The «explanations» of this kind was to give V.Starchanka, who was given sub-poena on March 31. V.Dambrowsky and A.Dawhala, members of the local commissions on presidential elections were also called to the prosecutor's office.

On March 19, in Mar'ina Gorka (Minsk region) at about 21 p.m. U.Zhawniak was detained while collecting the signatures by policemen and brought to the Town Administration of Internal Affairs.

On March 19, Viktar Belaskow, an inhabitant of Minsk, was detained in the town of Gorky (Magileu Region) while collecting the signatures for Zyanon Paznyak's nomination for Presidential office. The policemen brought him to the local Administration of Internal Affairs. According to Belaskow in the Administration of Internal Affairs the policemen drew up a report of detention and that one of confiscation of 5 subscription sheets and 62 copies of fly-sheets with information about forthcoming presidential elections. After this Viktar Belaskow was brought to the flat, where his mother lived. The flat was searched, some fly-sheets an subscription sheets were confiscated. Then he was brought to the Regional Prosecutor's Office, where he was interrogated by the regional Prosecutor in the presence Chairmen of local police and local department of Committee on State Security. At the end Viktar Belaskow was warned by the Prosecutor, who told that «in case he had carried on his activities he would have been brought to book according to the article 61 (p.1) of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus (plot aimed at illegal seizure of power)». But Belaskow was not given any official papers.

On March 19, at 9.45 a.m., Genrykh Zasimovich, an activist of the BPF «Adradzhennie», who lives in the village Seliavichy (Slonim district, Grodna Region), was «paid a visit» by policemen from the town of Slonim. He collected the signatures for Zyanon Paznyak in his village. The policemen were wondered why he did it.

G.Zasimovich was warned and promised «in case you don't come to your sense you will deal with the Committee on State Security (KGB) «. This visit was aimed at intimidating not only G.Zasimovich but all the villagers as well. And it was effective. After this visit many people were afraid of putting their signatures for Zyanon Paznyak.

On March 19, the pensioners I. Pyachkova and M. Halawniow were detained while collecting the signatures for Z.Paznyak in the Nadzezhdzinskaia Street in Minsk. They were brought to the district Administration of Internal Affairs, where they spent three hours. According to them they were forced to put down the explanations of their activities and then were drawn up a report of subscription sheets' confiscation.

On March 19, Yawgen Labanovich and Alexander Yuryn were detained in Minsk while collecting the signatures for Mikhail Chyhir's nomination for the Presidential office during the official picket organised by the Belarusan Independent Trade-union. Mrs. Karaliova was detained for the same reason at another picket of the Belarusan Independent Trade-union, which was held in Zhylunovich street. All the detained people were driven to the district Departments of Internal Affairs to draw up reports.

On March 21, Uladzimir Pliachko, who collected the signatures for Zyanon Paznyak in Brest, at about 23.00 p.m. was attacked by a man in camouflage uniform. It happened while U.Pliachko was going along the Kryvashein street near house No. 13. An unknown man snatched out a subscription sheet, tore it and hit the elderly man in the face... Mr. Plyachko also asserts, that he was dismissed from his job exactly because of the membership of the BPF.

On March 21, 1999 in Krychaw (Magilew region) militiamen came into the flat of M.I. Dowbik, Chairman of the Regional Commission on Presidential Elections. They proposed him to come with them for enlightening of some questions. In some time a militiaman came into the flat and told Dowbik's wife to give him her husband's passport. The militiaman informed her that Dowbik was accused in infringing of the Administrative Code. But Dowbik's wife didn't know where and for what «infringement» her husband was kept. Only on Monday 22 she found out that her husband had been sentenced to 15 days of administrative arrest for a small disorderly conduct (for «using foul language in presence of a militiaman»).

On March 22, the member of the BPF «Adradzhennie» Mikola Labanaw was detained by policemen while collecting the signatures for Zyanon Paznyak in Magileu in Astrowski Street. He was brought to Magileu Kastrychnitski District Department of Internal Affairs, where he was kept until midnight. The policemen refused to inform his relatives about his arrest. Various papers and documents, including papers with signatures, fly-sheets saying «Paznyak is paving the way to Europe» and those containing the information about the Belarusan People's Republic were taken away from Mikola Labanaw. He refused to sign the report accusing him of breaking the article 173 (p.3) of the Administrative Code of the Republic of Belarus.

On March 22, Chairman of the Mstsislaw District Commission on Presidential Elections Ivan Kazarez was called to the Prosecutor's Office, where he was warned for taking part in the work of the aforesaid commission. He was also warned about criminal responsibility (up to 12 years of imprisonment) provided by Article 61 (p.1) of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus.

On March 22, Vasil Alshewski, member of the Klichaw District Commission on Presidential Elections, was sentenced to 15 days of imprisonment. He was brought to the local Department of Internal Affairs for investigation. Then report about his detention was drawn up and he was brought to court.

On March 23, members of Klimavichy (town situated in Magileu Region) Commission on Presidential Elections were summoned to the Prosecutor's Office. Prosecutor A. Katliar warned them.

On March 23, the inhabitant of the Biaroza town (Brest region) Tatsiana Mikhailawna Alikhver, a pensioner and a member of the District Commission on Presidential Elections, who works under the contract in the social sphere, received a warning: if she did not leave her activities in the District Commission on Presidential Elections she would be dismissed.

On March 23, A. Shaternik, mem-

ber of the writers' league and member of Minsk Central District's Commission on Presidential Elections, was called to the District Administration of the Committee on State Security for Minsk and Minsk region, where he was warned by lieutenant H.I. Tartakowski. He was told about an inadmissibility of the illegal actions and was clarified, that the similar acts from his party in future, in case he did not make proper conclusions, it could result in bringing a criminal action against him and entail the criminal responsibility.

On March 25, Chairman of the BSDP «Narodnaia Gramada» Ales Serdziukow was detained by police officials in civil clothes in Magileu at the coach station at 6.00 a.m. He was brought to the Leninski district Administration of Internal Affairs for examination, where he was kept till 11.00 a.m. The policemen referred to the information they got about the heroin containing in the Serdziukow's bag while trying to explain the reason of his detention. But during the examination they found only subscription sheets with 1000 signatures for Mikhail Chyhir, which were confiscated. The note book of the detained man and his personal writing downs were confiscated as well. A.Serdziukow refused to sign the report drawn up by policemen, which accused him of breaking Article No. 167 (p.3) of the Code of Administrative Offences of the Republic of Belarus.

On March 25, members of a District Commission on Presidential Elections N.Ahanesian, U. Vialichkin, M. Lukashuk and R. Pronka were «invited» to the Prosecutor's Office of the Leninski district of Brest, where they were led a discussion by Prosecutor V.K. Masiuk. As it turned out, the Brest Town Executive Committee having received the lists of members of Commissions on Presidential Elections, has transmitted them to the Prosecutor's Office. And for this reason some Commissions have found in their mail boxes the sub-poenas.

On March 25, all the members of a District Commission on Presidential Elections were warned in Polatsk. Prosecutor of the Polatsk district N.M.Nikulenka in his official warnings emphasised «...in case you did not stop your activities in the Polatsk Commission on Presidential Elections .... you would be punished according to Article No. 167 (p.3) of the Administrative Code of the Republic of Belarus (breaking the election legislature)». The members of the Polatsk Commission on Presidential Elections have been given sub-poenas so far.

On March 25, Mikhail Bautovich, member of the Polatsk Commission on the Presidential Elections was summoned to the Polatsk city Prosecutor's Office, where he was officially warned by inspector A. Ausyuk for taking part in the Commission's activities.

On March 25, Mikola Ermalaew and Victar Stukaw, members of the Polatsk based Commission on Presidential Elections were summoned to the Polatsk city Prosecutor's Office and given some warning against administrative liability specified in Article 167.3 of the Administrative Code of the Republic of Belarus (breach of the law on elections).

On March 25, Ivan Yanukovich received summons to appear in the Polatsk district Prosecutor's office. Being a deputy of the Polatsk District Commission on the Presidential Elections, he was given a written warning against administrative liability specified in Article no. 167.3 of the Administrative Code of the Republic of Belarus (violation of the law about elections) signed by public Prosecutor of Polatsk District, senior counsellor of Justice N.M.Nikulenka.

On March 25, Zmitser Salawiow, activist of the initiative group for foundation of the «Viasna-96» press-centre in Navapolatsk, was called to rector of the Polatsk State University where he was a post-graduate student. Rector warned him against expulsion from the university provided that he continued his political activity and to take part in the Presidential election campaign.

On March 25, M.Ustsinenka, member of a local Commission on Presidential Elections was called to the Pukhavichy district's Administration of Committee on State Security in Mar'ina Gorka. Lieutenant-colonel V.P. Rypick warned him saying «your activity contradicts current legislation and might lead to the amenability provided by Article 61 (p.1) (plot aimed at seizure of power using unconstitutional means), which is under the KGB's control». M.Ustsinenka refused to sign up the report of his official warning.

On March 25, divisional inspector I.D.Gryshchanka of the Pershamaiski district of Minsk in the presence of the witnesses drew up a report of confiscation of subscription sheets from Mrs. Nina Fiodarawna Kaliada, born in 1930.

On March 25, Larysa Viktarawna Liaparskaia was called to the Prosecutor's Office of the Savetski district of Minsk. Mrs. H.A.Gryn, Prosecutor's assistant, and one more man, who didn't introduce himself, interrogated the woman. They wanted to know how she got into the Commission, what she did there and how much she earned. After interrogation Larysa Viktarawna was offered to read the article No. 167 (p.3) of the Code of Administrative Offences of the Republic of Belarus and not to break it. She was proposed to put down it into the examination report and to sign it. In such a way the talks with Ryhor Ivanovich and Alexander Makaw were conducted, who were called the same day to the Prosecutor's Office.

On March 27, approximately at 2 p.m., in Magileu members of Regional Commissions on Presidential Elections were attacked. It happened during the working meeting of Chairman of Magileu Regional Commission on Presidential Elections U.V.Shapavalaw with representatives of local District Commissions, which was held in a private flat. The house was surrounded by policemen and then people in civilian clothes together with policemen (in all 15 men) burst into the flat. Chairman of the Criminal Investigation Department of the Magileu Regional Administration of Internal Affairs lieutenant-colonel Karpaw and investigator lieutenant Senakosaw were at the head of the group. They searched the flat and carried an examination of all those present without any explanation and without showing corresponding documents and what is more without search warrant. During the search, which lasted 5 hours, owners of the flat were not allowed to use a telephone. Everything which happened in the flat was filmed. The militiamen confiscated copies of the subscription sheets (in all 258 copies), one copy of the Law on Presidential Elections and some other documents of the local Commissions on Presidential Elections as well as their seals and identity cards of those present. Witnesses were invited just to sign the confiscation report.

Lines, taken from a letter: «My name is Syarhei Ivannikaw. I am 26. I am doing my fourth year at the Journalists' Faculty of the Belarusan State University by correspondence. I am also a member of Barysaw based Commission on Presidential Elections. OnMarch 29, 1999 the divisional inspector Genadz Nestsiarovich brought me a subpoena saying that I had to visit Barysaw City Department of Internal Affairs on March 31, in particular the room No. 35 of the colonel Fiodar Padabed, deputy head of the Department. I was summoned there for being a member of the Commission on presidential elections. But I didn't visit the Department of Internal Affairs, because I consider this action of militia an unreasonable one. I act in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus adopted in 1994».

In the subpoena, which was received by the participant of the election campaign, citizen of Zhodzina A. Karaliow, the consequences of not

(to be continued on p.p. 8-9)

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN BELARUS OF 16 MAY 1999 AND VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS

(beginning on p.p.1-7)

visiting police department were described: «Malignant evasion of a witness or a victim from visiting the Investigative Structures will entail administrative influence upon Article 166. (p.2) of the Administrative Code of the Republic of Belarus». On March 30, Alexander Kaputski was called to the local Administration of Committee on State Security in Maladzechna for «making up illegal Commissions on Presidential Elections in the town of Maladzechna and in its district». He had a «talk» with B.P.Gladki, assistant of Chairman of the body mentioned above. Kaputski was officially warned that «activities of this kind from his party in the future...will entail criminal responsibility».

On March 29, all members of the Masty District Commission on Presidential Elections were summoned to Masty Prosecutor's Office (Grodna region). They were asked to give explanations concerning their activity and warned afterwards.

On March 29, Polatsk District Prosecutor's Office gave a warning to Andrei Savastsenak, member of a local Commission on Presidential Elections. In his appeal to the press centre of «Viasna-96» A.Savastsenak said: «I would like to draw your attention to the fact that there was no any registration number written on the document. I was told by deputy prosecutor L. Zaenka that the document had not been registered at the Prosecutor's Office. L. Zaenka refused to give comments on who stood behind the check-up on observing the Law about the Presidential Elections of the Republic of Belarus carried out by the Prosecutor's Office».

On March 29, Mikalai Sharakhan, member of the Polatsk based Commission on Presidential Elections was summoned to the local Prosecutor's Office where he was given a written warning for taking part in the work of the Commission under the signature of senior counsellor of Justice of Polatsk city A.M. Kucharenka.

In March, Pavel Burdyka, head of the Polatsk District Commission on Presidential Elections (Vitsebsk region) was summoned to the Prosecutor's Office several times.

On April 1, A.Maroz and V.Vysotski, members of the Verkhniadvinsk District Commission on Presidential Elections were summoned to Criminal Investigation Department. They were asked to give explanations regarding the Commission's activity.

On April 12 and April 16, 1999 official warnings about «inadmissibility of the activities being carried out concerning the presidential elections» were given to the members of Sharkawshchyna District Commission on presidential elections based in Vitsebsk Region) Mikalai Batvinenka and Alexander Strelenka by the Prosecutor's Office. «In case if you don't execute the claims stated in the official warning, you can undergo administrative or criminal punishment» – is said in the official warning, signed by the Prosecutor of Sharkawshchyna District H.Karnienka.

6. ARRESTS OF MEMBERS OF COMMISSIONS ON PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS AND CONFISCATION OF THE VOTING BULLETINS.

On May 7 , on his way out of the city Gomel vice-Chairman of Gomel Regional Commission Viktrar Yafimaw was detained by a post of the State Road Inspection. 25000 of the voting bulletins were taken away from him.

On May 7, 1999 in the morning, Chairman of Babruisk Leninski district's Commission on Presidential Elections Ihar Hadzko and the activist of the electoral campaign Ales Chyhir were detained in Babruisk while spreading posters with information about presidential elections scheduled on May 16. Both of them were taken to Leninski District Department of Internal Affairs. There they were made to write out explanations while militiamen were drawing up the reports about confiscation of posters and fly-sheets.

On May 7, flats of Ihar Kiryn, Chairman of Glusk Regional Commission on the presidential elections of the Republic of Belarus, Yawhen Faletski (vice-Chairman of the Commission) and Genadz Yanushewski (a Commission's member) were searched. The search was conducted by members of Glusk Region's Department of Internal Affairs with permission of Prosecutor of Glusk District Ihar Savastsev. The search was directed by the Lieutenant Kuzmiankow. It was aimed at confiscation of documentation connected with the presidential elections. The resolution of the Central Election Commission No. 192 about organisation of presidential elections and the bulletin No.5 of the Human Rights Centre «Viasna-96» «The Right to Freedom» containing the information about persecutions and repressions against members of local Commissions on presidential elections were confiscated. No documents connected with presidential elections were found in the flats of Yanchewski and Faletski.

On May 8, flat of Larysa Dziakava, secretary of Glusk Regional Commission on presidential elections, was searched. The search was conducted by members of Glusk Regional Department of Internal Affairs with the permission of Prosecutor of Glusk District Ihar Savastsew. It was aimed at confiscation of documentation connected with the Presidential Elections. During the search the Resolution of the European Parliament about situation in Belarus, instruction on completion of voting papers, informational announcement about creation of Glusk Regional Commission on the presidential elections of the Republic of Belarus were confiscated. It was the sixth search which was carried out at places of the Commission's members.

On May 8, several members of local Commissions on the presidential elections were detained. One of them, Ihar Stukalaw, was detained when he was coming out of the building where Magileu Regional Commission on presidential elections was based. For attempt to return back in the building he was accused of «resistance to policemen's legal actions» (Article 166 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus). I.Stukalaw was kept in the Central District Department of Internal Affairs till May 10. On May 10 I.Stukalaw stood the trial and was sentenced to three days of administrative arrest. All the papers concerning the presidential elections were confiscated.

On May 9, Anatol Fiodaraw, deputy chairman of Magileu Regional Commission, and Aleg Dz'yachkow the members of local Commissions on presidential elections were detained by policemen near Magileu's bus terminal. They took away from the Commissions' members all the materials concerning the Presidential elections. Fiodaraw and Dz'yachkow were kept in a police department for more than three hours. Anatol Fiodaraw didn't stay a trial of him which was appointed on May 11. Instead of this he directed to the court the statement in which he asked to put the trial off because of his illness. The judge considered this action to be a sign of court's disrespect. That's why at midday on May 12, 1999 A.Fiodaraw was

detained and taken to Magileu's Leninsky District Court where he was sentenced to three days of administrative arrest for «disrespect towards the court».

On May 10, Vasil Prakopchyk and Kanstantsin Myslivets, members of Drahichyn District Commission on presidential elections were detained at 7 p.m. in the town of Drahichyn (Brest region). 10-year-old daughter of Myslivets was also detained with them. 160 voting bulletins were taken away from the Commission's members. Policemen drew up the reports of detention and confiscation of the bulletins. Then they dismissed all the detained people under condition that the Commission's members would go to the District Department of Internal Affairs at 8 a.m. on May 11, 1999.

On May 10, Piatro Zosich and Valery Hniadzko were detained by armed policemen in the Central Square of the town of Luninets while speaking with the youth (Brest region). Voting bulletins and seal were taken away from them. They were accused of breaking the law on meetings and processions (Article 167 (p.1) of the Administrative Code of the Republic of Belarus). On May 11 they stood trial. As a result of the trial Piatro Zosich was sentenced to 10 days of administrative arrest, Valery Hniadzko was fined 1 million roubles.

On May 10, a group of policemen and men wearing civil clothes searched the private printing house «Palimark». Policemen told the workers of the printing house that they were informed there's a bomb in the building. The search lasted for three hours. Policemen were obviously more interested in printed materials than in finding a bomb. This search was caused by the order given to members of KGB and policemen to search for materials connected with the presidential elections scheduled on May 16 and confiscate them.

7. State Committee on Press warned the to the newspapers «Narodnaya Volya», «Beloruskaya Delovaya Gazeta», «Imya», «Pagonia», «Zgoda» for publishing information concerning the presidential elections in the Republic of Belarus.

On February 13, the newspapers «Naviny», «Beloruskaya Delovaya Gazeta», «Pagonia» and «Svobodnyie Novosti» and some other independent newspapers which published materials concerning presidential elections were warned by the State Committee on Press of the RB. The warnings said that: «publications about presidential elections on behalf of the body which does not exist» breaks an article of the law on press by «calling to unconstitutional seizure of power». It was pointed out by the Re-registration Department of the State Committee on Press that if the newspapers went on publishing announcements about the elections, they could be closed even without a trial.

8. Detentions of members of Election Commissions on May 16.

Minsk

On May 16, electors of Maskowsky disrtict with the chairman of Strike-committee Syargei Antonchyk and deputy chairman Georgii Mukhin at the head organised a stationary polling station. According to S.Antonchyk the decision of making this polling station was passed by the electors in respond to V.Ganchar who stated that it was impossible to hold presidential election in one day. An old bus was used for this purpose. The voting was carried out in accordance with all procedures provided by the law: there was a room of secret voting in the bus, members of the local Commission on presidential elections and observers were present. Antonchyk said that for organisation of the polling station only 5 million roubles were spent (approximately $10).

The voting was carried out from 9.30 a.m. to 7.15 p.m. On May 16 in the morning members of the Commission visited flats of citizens and invited them to take part in the elections. Out from 2100 invited people 1180 took part in the voting. Dozens of Belarusan and Foreign journalists observed the elections. The observer of OSCE Adrian Severin was also present. At 7.15 p.m. the organisers were informed that policemen were going to detain members of the Commission and take the voting bulletins and lists with surnames of electors. At 7.20 p.m. the organisers stopped the elections and hid in the neighbouring house. In two minutes the entrance of the house was blocked by policemen who tried to arrest the organisers and participants of the elections. But they managed to escape and save the documentation.

Grodna

At 11.10 a.m. the members of a local Election Commission Ales Barel and Kazimir Lokits were arrested at the stationary polling station in Karl Marx Street 11, where they conducted the elections. Policemen drew up reports of their arrest, confiscated ballot boxes an 500 voting bulletins. Valiantsin Luchko and Mikola Voran, members of Grodna Regional Election Commission who were present as observers at this polling station were also detained. The illegal actions of the policemen were witnessed by the barrister Uladzimir Kisialevich, member of «Viasna-96».

At 11.30 a.m. the members of a local Commission Yawhen Chyhir and Zmitser Kachan, who conducted the elections in an open public polling station in the suburb Farty were arrested. Policemen drew up reports, confiscated ballot boxes and 66 voting bulletins. Kachan's personal car was searched. As a result 143 more bulletins were taken away from him. The member of Grodna Regional Election Commission Yuras Matsko and the representative of the Belarusan Helsinki Committee Alexander Paradkaw who observed the elections were also detained.

At 1 p.m. the members of a local Commission Viktar Sukhi and Mihas Charnushchyk and Piotr Anisimovich were detained. Policemen drew up reports, confiscated ballot boxes and 1419 voting bulletins.

Workers of «Azot» amalgamation phoned members of a local Election Commission asking them to come at the factory's checking point in order to provide their right to vote. But when the Commission's members arrived they were met by policemen who tried to detain them.

The elections were held also in the headquarters of the BPF in Karl Marx Street 11. A group of policemen attended the polling station with Mr. Sitnikaw at the head. They tried to impose the Commission's members upon their «guard», telling that unknown person had phoned to a police department and threatened to throw a hand-grenade into the polling station. The Commission's members refused to be «guarded» by policemen.

In Grodna entrances of all hostels were guarded by policemen who told that access there was limited by the city's Executive Committee because of the presidential elections.

Slonim

At 11 a.m. the members of a local Commission on presidential elections Adam Yorsh and Ales Masiuk who conducted the elections at a public polling station out-of-doors were arrested. Policemen drew up the reports and confiscated ballot boxes as well as voting bulletins.

Masty

Members of Commissions on presidential elections Mikhas Haladukhaw and Yazep Palubiatka were arrested while conducting the elections. Policemen drew up reports of their

(to be continued on p. 10)

Presidential Elections in Belarus of 16 May 1999 and Violations of Human Rights

(beginning on p.p.1-9)

arrest, confiscated ballot boxes as well as voting bulletins.

Zelva

Seven policemen with the head of Propaganda District of the Region's Executive Committee burst into Yuras Kachuk's flat, where a polling station was placed. They confiscated ballot box and voting bulletins, tried to force I. Kachuk to write out explanations of what was going on in his flat. They also gave him a call-up paper to interrogation.

Polatsk

Polatsk Commission on presidential elections started working at 4 p.m. because of absence of financial means. Stationary polling station was opened. Soon the police colonel Rabchynski came there with a film-operator who filmed the voting point. In some time deputy chairman of the Town Executive Committee A.Machulovich appeared. In 10 minutes a special group of policemen with colonel Aliskovich at head burst into the room. All the people who were in the room were detained, even the electors. The ballot-box with voting bulletins, lists of electors and independent newspapers were confiscated. The members of Election Commission M.Bawtovich, V.Stukhaw, U.Muchanka, M.Sharak were detained and brought to the local Department of Internal Affairs. Then policemen drew up reports of their detention and gave them sub-poenas to come to the Department of Internal Affairs on May 17.

Results of Presidential Elections

The resolution No. 192 titled «About results of presidential elections in Belarus» passed by the Central Election Commission on May 18, 1999 says:

To admit the results of presidential elections and consider them to be invalid because of violations which took place during pre-election campaign and elections themselves:

– State authorities put obstacles in opposition's way to hold the presidential elections to realise the citizens' right to free election of their President;

– absence of the possibilities to openly discuss the electoral programs of the candidates for Presidential office;

– absence of the right to free agitation for and against the candidates;

Using the mechanisms of prosecutors' Offices, police, KGB and other institutions the State authorities constantly persecuted the members of Election Commissions of different levels. As a matter of fact everybody engaged in the activities of the Regional, District and City Commissions was summoned to the Prosecutors' Offices and KGB where they were officially warned «about inadmissibility of further violations of the law and possibility to draw them to criminal or administrative responsibility «. According to the «Law on the Prosecutor's Offices» warning is one of the kinds of the Prosecutor's responses. The figure of people warned in Belarus during the election campaign is about 1000. The Human Rights Centre «Viasna-96» received many communications about numerous persecutions of people at their jobs for taking part in the activities of Commissions on presidential elections. Many people were brought to administrative punishment for breaking Article 167 (p.3) of the Administrative Code of the Republic of Belarus for collecting signatures.

The elections were declared and scheduled by the legitimate Supreme Soviet of the 13[th] Convocation dissolved by Lukashenka.

During the electoral campaign not only the Belarusan authorities violated the law. Some violations were also made by all the main sides which participated in the elections.

For instance, the Central Election Commission with V.Ganchar at the head didn't conduct the examination of authenticity of the signatures which were collected for Chyhir and Paznyak, though the claims to conduct such examination in written form were expressed by Z.Paznyak's representatives.

In the course of collecting signatures Z.Paznyak violated the law before he was registered as a candidate. In private, he repeatedly expressed his attitude towards Chyhir's nomination in press. He also called to boycott the elections. There's a quotation from the newspaper «Pagonia» issued on May 20, 1999 which proves it:

On May 11, basing on the law and lawful position of the Belarusan Popular Front (Approval of the BPF's Soym (sitting) on May 8) I recommended members of the BPF to leave immediately the electoral profanation in order not to be drawn in lie.

Zyanon Paznyak.
May 15, 1999

On the eve of elections the rights of the major part of electors were violated. The reasons for this were that the Commissions on the Presidential Elections:

1. Didn't make up register of voters and did not print the necessary amount of the voting-papers.
2. Stationary polling stations were not provided and the electors were not informed about the places where they could to vote.
3. The members of the Commissions who carried the portable ballot-boxes to citizens' flats were not controlled.

On May 19, 1999 at the press-conference Chairman of the Central Commission on Presidential Elections Viktar Ganchar called the conditions under which the elections had to be carried out abnormal. He meant massed repressions against members of Commissions on presidential elections and against activists of the electoral campaign. But, in spite of repressions, emphasised V.Ganchar, members of the Commissions managed to do an impossible thing – to complete the process of elections up to the end.

According to Adrian Severin, representative of the OSCE group in Belarus, «the elections had been the political event which gave possibility to make certain conclusions». A.Severin believes that representatives of the Belarusan authorities and opposition will positively use this event for beginning of serious and constructive negotiations to find a way out of the Constitutional crisis in the Republic. OSCE paid special attention to facts of persecution and counteractions which accompanied the process of elections. Adrian Severin stated that «detention of one of the candidates for Presidential post must be stopped immediately». «Taking into account interference of Belarusan authorities in the process of elections we did not expect them to meet standards of OSCE» – said Severin.

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